



# Here For You

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**Summary:**

Ben realizes some things about Stan as they study together.

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### Author's Note:

Don't know where this came from, but I thought it was cute. Plus, I'm a sucker for unconventional ships. Hope you like it!

Beverly. Ben loved everything about Beverly— her hair, her eyes, her fire. He'd never met someone quite as fearless as her; someone quite as passionate or genuinely kind. Ben was convinced she could've singlehandedly defeated Pennywise if she'd had to. But she hadn't, because she'd had all of them to fight alongside her, Bill being one of them.

Bill was as love struck with Bev as he was. Not that Ben blamed him or anything. In fact, the boy was every bit as good as Bev, matching her in bravery and intent.

They were a great match.

After their battle with Pennywise, Bev moved off to Portland, but that didn't stop the young couple from starting a relationship. They wrote back and forth and as often as possible, Stan told him, and Bev was planning on visiting next summer vacation. Bill looked forward to it.

"It's all he talks about these days," Stan told him during their tiny break from studying. Ben had invited him over to his house. They'd discovered they worked pretty well together when it came to studying, and given Mr. Thompson's knack in generating the world's most impossible quizzes, they figured it was best to combine forces against him. Ben was nothing if not observant and he caught right away the sad tone and demeanor in the other boy as he talked about Bill and Beverly. He knew he sported the same look from time to time, though less and less these days. He'd also seen the way Stan looked at Bill (or admired more like) and the longing in those hazel eyes as he listened intently to every one of Bill's words, and the pain when those words were about her.

Bill's disregard toward Stan's feelings bothered Ben. Couldn't he see

that him talking about Beverly every few minutes made Stan heart ache? Couldn't he see how much the boy loved him? Couldn't he see the longing and pain haunting those beautiful, soulful eyes?

"How do you feel about it?" Ben asked after a brief moment of silence. Stan furrowed his brow and shot him a curious glance. "...a-about Bev visiting," he stuttered, drying his sweaty palms on his jeans. God, why did being alone with Stan make him so nervous of late?

"I miss Bev," Stan stated, matter-of-fact, keeping his gaze trained on the history book in his hands, eyes roaming over the words without really seeing them. "I'm happy she's coming."

"Right, me too...of course," he let out through a nervous chuckle, "but I meant—"

Stan stopped attempting to read and lifted his eyes to study him. There was an uncanny wisdom in them, and when they were so fixated on him like they were now, Ben's face flushed and his stomach churned. Stan waited for him to explain himself with uncharacteristic patience for a thirteen year old and Ben began stuttering as hard as Bill on a bad day. He didn't know what to say so he just opted for his natural course of action and embarrassed himself:

"Bill's a cool guy, isn't he?"

*Good one, Ben.* He cringed at his awkwardness. Stan didn't react much at the out of the blue question, or he did but hid it pretty well behind a serene expression. He merely shifted his eyes back to the book in his hands, which now lay closed on his lap.

"Am I that obvious?" Stan's voice cracked at bit. So he wasn't as serene as he seemed.

"What? No," Ben waved his hand, brushing off Stan's worry; then widened his eyes in distress at his carelessness. "I mean—what're you talking about, Stan?"

"Drop it. I know what you mean."

Stan's eyes met his again, unshielded. The sight made Ben's heart ache. It was like staring right into Stan's broken soul. Like he'd been covering it up all this time and it now lay exposed and gapping for Ben to see. And then he knew. It was not possible for all that pain to be caused only by unrequited, teenage love. Something else was up with Stan and Ben needed to know. It was important that he knew.

"Stan, are you okay?"

With a soft sigh, Stan lay the book beside him on the bed and delicately shifted on his seat to face Ben; the movement barely crumpling the bedcovers underneath. Ben had made a conscious effort to make his bed and tidy up his mess of a room before receiving Stan. Although Stan had never uttered a word on his lack of order, it just didn't feel right to force the impeccable boy to have his lovely self surrounded by such chaos.

"Are *you*?" Such a simple question, but carried out with a skeptical tone that loaded it with obscurity.

Ben wasn't completely okay, of course. They'd stood up against a demonic entity of sorts and although they'd won, none of them had come out of it unscathed. But he was— to the best of his abilities— *getting there*. He didn't have nightmares anymore and he'd altogether stopped looking over his shoulder every five minutes. But the way Stan asked that question, told him that he shouldn't be *okay* and the mere notion of it was ludicrous, but he was, as were the rest of the losers. And here was Stan subtly telling him that he wasn't. Not even remotely so. Then again, if Ben had been down in the sewers on his own, facing two of his worst fears and one of them almost chewing his face off, he probably wouldn't be on his way to be okay.

"It'll get better. I promise," he felt the urge to say, transmitting as much confidence in his voice and gaze as he could. "If not, I'm here for you." With that, he put his hand on top of Stan's soft one. It almost felt wrong to touch Stan in such an intimate way. Stan had always given Ben the impression of being, for lack of a better word, ethereal. With his soft features and smooth skin and honey curls and regal posture; graceful in a way that only some of those birds Stan loved so much could be. But Stan didn't scrunch up his nose like something as pure and beautiful as Stan was ought to do when

someone like Ben touched them, nor did he pull his hand away in disgust. Instead, Stan looked down at their joined hands and turned his own palm up, entwining their fingers together. Ben could hardly believe it. His heart started racing in his chest, even faster when Stan gifted him with an affectionate, honest smile.

“Thank you.”

He'd never acted as awkwardly as he did in that moment, sputtering out an inarticulate, “No need to thank me, Stan the Man,” immediately mortified by his boldness to use one of Richie's nicknames for Stan without asking for permission first. His cheeks felt like he could fry an egg on them.

Stan's smile grew wider at his self-conscious antics and with a gentle squeeze, he pulled his hand away, the warmth and softness of it tickling Ben's hand for a few seconds after they'd parted. And then, Stan did the unthinkable, he reached down to grab something peeking from underneath Ben's nightstand. When the boy sat back upright, Ben almost had a heart attack. New kids on the block's *Hangin' Tough* cassette sat innocently in Stan's hand.

So much for his attempt to avoid unnecessary embarrassments by taking down their poster from behind his door.

Ben swallowed hard and closed his eyes, waiting for the imminent outburst of laughter and finger pointing for his lame tastes in music.

When a few, tortuous seconds passed and no sound came from Stan, Ben sneaked a peek at the other boy, slowly opening one eye to see what Stan was doing. *He probably left*, Ben thought briefly, just before Stan came into view.

To Ben's surprise, Stan was just sitting there, studying the booklet — which he'd carefully taken out of its case— with interest. And just like that, after another handful of tortuous seconds, he folded it again —neatly, of course— and put it back in its case. Then, he placed the cassette on Ben's night stand with great care and turned his attention back to the forgotten book on the bed, picking it up and opening it where he'd placed a brownish feather to mark the page he'd been previously reading from.

“We better continue. We only have two more days.”

Ben stared agape. Anyone else would’ve laughed or teased him at the very least. But no. Not Stan Uris, no. Instead, Stan kept on studying like nothing had happened, like he hadn’t just held the power to completely destroy the weak remains of Ben’s confidence in his hands. Ben’s heart kept on beating fast and his face burned, but now for a different reason.

He was angry.

Angry at Henry Bowers and his goons for taking it upon themselves to *punish* Stan for being Jewish at every chance they’d had before Henry beat it; angry at Eddie’s mom for singling him out for the same reason and talking trash about him, forbidding Stan from walking into her house like he was some malicious delinquent instead of the good, sensible boy he really was; angry at Bill Denbrough for not returning Stan’s precious feelings; angry at fucking Pennywise for sensing Stan’s frailty and feeding on it, possibly shattering the boy beyond repair.

No. Someone like Stan deserved better than that. He deserved to be treated with the utmost care and be fiercely protected and loved.

*Loved.*

At that moment, Ben made a silent vow to dedicate his life to make sure that Stan healed from each one of the ordeals he’d suffered in his young life. He’d dig deep, so deep, until he found whatever demons were dwelling within this angel. He’d rip them out from the root and destroy every one of them until those eyes were filled with nothing but happiness and hope. No more darkness and despair.

Oh, and he was pretty damn sure he’d fallen head over heels in love with Stan right then and there, if not before. But it was there, in his poorly tidied up room as they studied for their history test together, that he recognized the feelings as love and his heart began swelling up with poetry. Not for the girl with fire in her curls, but for the lovely boy with specks of gold in his.